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CORRESPONDENCE

Nancrède and Rivarol

A document giving evidence of the cultural relations between France and our own country as a sequel to the Revolution and the unforgettable aid France gave us in that crucial hour of our national life has been discussed in a recent number of *M. L. N.* (January, 1920, pp. 10-18) by Professor Schinz in his article on *Un Rousseauiste en Amérique.* M. Nancrède, the "rousseauiste" in question, compiled a book of selections in French for reading which appeared in 1792 under the title: *l'Abeille Françoise.* The book and its compiler are both skilfully appraised by Professor Schinz, who points out particularly M. Nancrède's general orientation as shown by his preference for certain authors as well as his choice of certain subjects. There are, however, two or three points in the article which seem to call for some slight comment.

M. Nancrède printed at the end of his volume the names of the eighty-five subscribers to his little book in grateful acknowledgement, as it were, of their share in the success of his venture. Of these names Professor Schinz presents eleven with the very just comment: "C'était l'aristocratie bostonienne." It would, however, be a mistake to remain under the impression that all of the names are similar to those printed in the article. It may not be totally devoid of interest nor bare of all significance to note that among the subscribers the following names appear: James Baudoin, Esq., Nathaniel Bethune, M. Blanchet, Miss Mary Callahan, Léon Chappotin, César Dubuc, Coupre Duparc, Mme Fitzpatrice, née de Bovis, Francis Garaux, Augustin Godemar, Benjamin Larkin and Ebenezer Larkin—both generous to the extent of twelve copies each—M. de Maisoncelle de Vertille, Mamay Masson, Daniel Poignard, Rev. Louis Roussellet, James Sullivan, Esq., Paul Trapier, Benjamin Trapier. All of these were no doubt of "l'aristocratie bostonienne," but of other antecedents than Hancock, Adams, Lowell, Coolidge, etc. Indeed a fair representation of French and of Irish whose interest in French or in M. Nancrède was sufficient to induce a subscription.

In commenting upon the selections made, Professor Schinz says (p. 15) "Et quand, à la page 316, on lit une traduction (probablement par Nancrède) de Gessner, *La matinée d'automne,* on se demande pourquoi Nancrède n'a pas reproduit simplement la description du soleil levant par Rousseau lui-même." On page 182 there is a selection from Rousseau (*Emile, livre iii*) beginning: "Une belle soirée on va se promener dans un lieu favorable. . . .

Le lendemain . . . on retourne au même lieu avant que le soleil se lève. On le voit s'annoncer de loin par les traits de feu . . ." and ending: "Il y a là une demi-heure d'enchantement auquel nul homme ne résiste: un spectacle si grand, si beau, si délicieux n'en laisse aucun de sang-froid." Can this be the passage which Professor Schinz had in mind? If so, Nancrède scarcely merits the implied reproof.

As a text-book compiler Joseph Nancrède was apparently not oblivious to the fact that a learner's interest in language work is frequently retained, if not actually stimulated, by coming across a passage now and then dealing with familiar things, or touching local matters, for he has inserted three passages from Brissot's *Voyages:* one entitled *Boston,* another, *Commencement ou anniversaire à Cambridge* and finally, *Consomption chez les Américains.* It should be added that these selections are placed all fairly near together.

Before presenting his analysis of the work, Professor Schinz says of the Introduction: "Les pages consacrées à une rapide revue des causes historiques qui donnent à la langue française son importance dans le monde civilisé, trahissent un homme qui peut avoir du style." An extract is then given to support this statement, a passage showing, indeed, evidence of style, but the style is that of another and a greater than Nancrède, as is clear if we compare the text of the introduction with that of Rivarol's famous essay on *l'Universalité de la langue française.* Nancrède has borrowed both form and matter, the very phraseology, practically the same order of points in the argument, with here and there a modification by the omission of a part or the whole of a paragraph, or by a change in verb or tense. The changes are for the most part slight and immaterial. Nancrède has simply condensed the essay. In the main, the sense, the movement, the style remain unchanged. The following citation will serve as an illustration of Nancrède's method: Nancrède—"et l'on peut dire que lorsqu'on arrive chez un peuple et qu'on y trouve la langue Françoise, on doit se croire chez un peuple poli." Rivarol—"Aristippe ayant fait naufrage, aborda dans une île inconnue, et voyant des figures de géometrie tracées sur le rivage, s'écria que les dieux ne l'avaient pas conduit chez des barbares. Quand on arrive chez un peuple et qu'on y trouve la langue française on peut se croire chez un peuple poli."

There is but one variation of consequence, I think, namely where Nancrède prints: "Bayle plaça le doute aux pieds de la verité et Bossuet la mit aux pieds des rois"; and Rivarol reads: "Bayle plaça le doute aux pieds de la verité, et Bossuet tonna sur la tête des rois."

There can be no doubt of Nancrède's indebtedness to the author of the essay. It would be interesting, however, to know whether

Nancrède used the first edition of the *Discours* (Berlin, Georges Jacques Decker, 1784), or the second, which appeared early in 1785 (Paris, Prault et Bailly) "par les soins de Rivarol lui-même," according to M. André Le Breton in *Rivarol, sa vie, ses oeuvres, son talent* (Paris, 1895, p. 357). This edition, says M. Le Breton, "présente d'assez grandes différences de texte avec la première." We might then know the exact extent of Nancrède's changes; but his debt to Rivarol would still remain.

A certain piquancy is added to the situation by the fact that among the reading selections there is one from Voltaire entitled *Plagiat.* "Le véritable plagiat," the passage reads, "est de donner pour vôtres les ouvrages d'autrui, de coudre dans vos rapsodies de longs passages d'un bon livre avec quelques petits changements. Mais le lecteur éclairé voyant un morceau de drap d'or sur un habit de bure, reconnaît bientôt le voleur maladroit."

Nancrède may not have been a "voleur maladroit"; that would be far too harsh a term, but he surely knew the gentle art of "quelques petits changements."

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"GO TO HALIFAX"

The scornful invitation to "go to Halifax" seems to have grown out of the unsavory reputation the Nova Scotian city bore in colonial times, a reputation to which the father of Queen Victoria made no little contribution in his younger days. In his *Satire on Halifax, in Nova Scotia,* John Maylem, a graduate of Harvard, writing probably in the second decade after the founding of the city (1749), has the following:

> The dregs of Thames and Liffy's sable stream,
> Danubian rubbish and the Rhine's my theme,
> Of them I sing, the rebel vagrant rout,
> Base emigrants that Europe speweth out,
> Their country's bane, such traitorous scoundrel crews,
> Torn from the gaols, the gallows, and the stews,
> From Europe's plains to Nova Scotia's woods,
> Transported over the great Atlantic's floods;
> In shoals they come, and fugitive invade
> The horrid gloom of Halifax's shade.
> Oh, Halifax! the worst of God's creation,
> Possesst of the worst scoundrels of the nation:
> Whores, rogues, and thieves, the dregs and scum of vice,
> Bred up in villany, theft, rags, and lice—
> Proud upstarts here, tho' starved from whence they came;
> Just such a scoundrel pack first peopled Rome;
> Send them to hell and then they'll be at home.

Wabash College. HORACE W. O'CONNOR.